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JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

Seminary sets record number of Dec. grads

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — New Orleans Seminary set a fall semester record when the 96-year-old Southern Baptist institution awarded degrees to 254 graduates during commencement Dec. 14.

Of the 254 graduates, 40 students received doctoral degrees — one of the largest doctoral classes on record.

Pointing graduates to the experiences they will incur post-graduation, seminary president Chuck Kelley challenged them to always remember what they already have and what they carry into their world of ministry: hope.

"This is what you will carry from here, the certain knowledge there is hope," he said.

Kelley said the December graduates carry the same message with them that "any life can be changed through Jesus Christ, that any sin and any brokenness can be restored and mended, that there is no circumstance in which God cannot work, that there is no situation in which hope cannot be found."

"Jesus has the power to change any human life through the simple act of repentance and faith."

In addition to associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees awarded, the seminary conferred several degrees for the first time during the ceremony. Those degrees included graduate certificates in women's ministry, bivocational ministry, church leadership, Greek studies, and pastoral ministry.


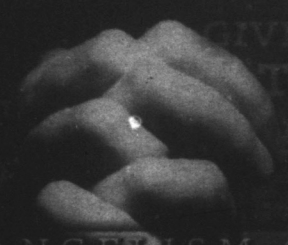
Three students also earned the master of theological studies degree for the first time, one of three accredited, online degrees seminary trustees approved in 2012. The other two online master degrees currently available are the master of arts in biblical studies and the master of arts in theology.

While available completely online, each of the three degrees also are available in a traditional classroom format or a combination of both. The ability to customize each degree allows the student to tailor courses of study to fit individual needs.

GIVE ME A BOLDNESS
TO TELL THEM
ABOUT
PEOPLE AND
YOU.

2014 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

January 26-27, 2014
Northcrest Baptist Church,
Meridian



State Evangelism Conf. set for Jan. 26-27

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

The 2014 Mississippi Baptist State Evangelism Conference, slated for Jan. 26-27 at Northcrest Church in Meridian, isn't just for preachers.

"It's designed to provide an opportunity for both pastors and church families to be encouraged to share the Gospel with their communities. Evangelism should be important to every Christian. I just believe the more church

"I believe that God has a word for you that He will make clear through the preaching of these men that will impact your life for eternity."

Don Lum

conference organizer and director of evangelism at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

families that attend, the more they will leave at the close of the conference with the motivation to reach lost people for Christ," said Don Lum, conference organizer and director of evangelism at the Mississippi Baptist Convention

Board (MBCB) in Jackson.

Featured speakers include:

■ Jim Futral, MBCB executive director.

■ Kevin Hamm, senior pastor at Gardendale First Church in Gardendale, Ala.

■ Johnny Hunt, senior

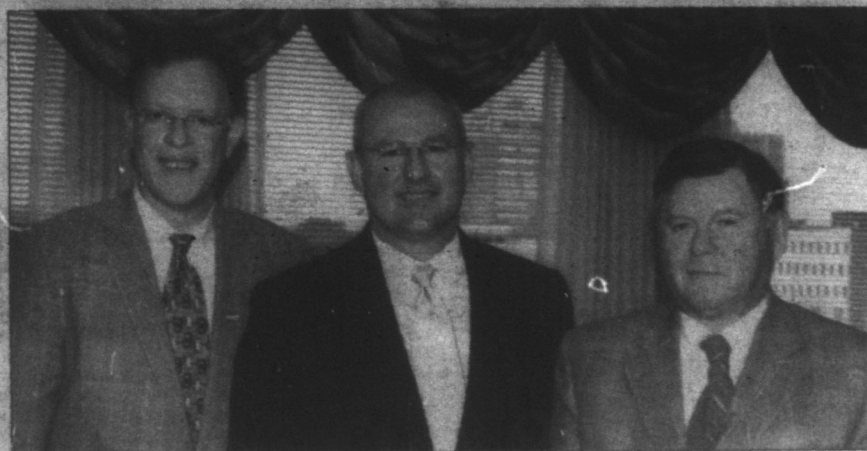
pastor of First Church in Woodstock, Ga., and former two-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

■ Jeff LaBorg, senior pastor at First Church — East Campus in Indian Trail, N.C.

■ Fred Luter, senior pastor of Franklin Avenue Church in New Orleans and the current SBC president in his second term.

■ Bob Pitman, retired pastor of Kirby Woods Church

see CONFERENCE on p. 6

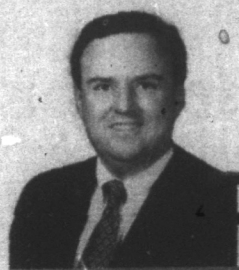


BOARD LEADERS — Newly-elected officers of the 100-member Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for 2014 include (from left) Greg Warnock, senior pastor of First Church, Brookhaven, vice-president; Mark Vincent, pastor of Clarke-Venable Church in Decatur, president; and Rex Yancey, pastor of First Church, Ripley, recording secretary. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Radicals in 2014

John Avant, senior pastor of First Church Concord in Knoxville, Tenn., tells of a mission trip he led at a previous church he pastored. The name of the Asian country they visited will be omitted due to the sensitivity of the ongoing missionary work there.

Avant said he met a woman in a small village who had accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, and was so filled with the Holy Spirit that she began traveling to neighboring villages to spread the Good News.

The government discouraged her evangelizing,

even going so far as to jail her on several occasions on a variety of charges. Each time she was imprisoned, the authorities would have to release her when they realized they were making her a martyr among the people to whom she had witnessed. Each time she was released, she would go right back to evangelizing.

Desperate to slow down her growing ministry, the government assigned employees to shadow her every move and follow her from village to village in a pickup with a public address system mounted on top. "Don't listen to this woman!" they would loudly announce. "She is a dangerous radical!"

Undeterred, she continued on her mission, Avant said, under the constant din of loudspeakers blaring, "Don't listen to this woman! She is a dangerous radical!"

Avant takes a long pause at this point in the telling of the story, and asks, "When did we stop being 'dangerous radicals' for Jesus Christ?"

Wow. What a bombshell question. When did American Christians stop being "dangerous radicals" for Jesus Christ? When did we decide to take the easy way out? When did we get so comfortable that we stopped challenging the culture and winning people to Jesus? When did American

Christians cease risking ridicule, rejection, and censure for the sake of our fellow man?

No truthful person even told us it would be easy to take a stand for Jesus. If the history of Christianity teaches us anything, it is that Believers must be prepared for the cost of following Jesus. Even Jesus clearly explained that to us.

We have become so comfortable and relaxed in our affluence and perceived physical security that we don't like rocking the boat. We're too well-fed. We're

too cool in the hot summer. We're too warm in the cold winter. There are no missiles raining down on our heads.

Many of us have become so spiritually sedentary that we'll accept almost any mistreatment of Jesus and His followers, and any misrepresentation of who we really are, without exerting as much as a whimper in protest.

We will allow an honorable man to be publicly reviled as an extremist and unfit for society because he had the

audacity to publicly define sin for what it is. We'll permit any kind of putrid "entertainment" into our homes — and into our children's minds — as long as no one makes fun of us and calls us names.

We will avert our eyes while babies are killed every day on a whim and drunk drivers are allowed to continue their slaughter, as long as we can swim in the warm social mainstream.

Is it too late, or can we once again assume the rightful role of a Christian? Can we purposely change ourselves and, in the process, change the world in ways that will bring honor to our Heavenly Father and lead mankind to eternal salvation?

Are we ready to once again join the ranks of "dangerous radicals?" A lost world in 2014 awaits our decision.

Are you and your church 'all in?'

Our commitment to reach the peoples of the world with the Gospel unites us as Southern Baptists like nothing else. Our history shows we take Jesus' Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) seriously, as we've planted the Gospel in both fruitful and harsh soils around the globe for 168 years.

Even today as I visit churches throughout the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), I see that passion displayed in many Southern Baptists who are completely committed to fulfilling the Great Commission.

Yet with 6,000 people groups worldwide with little or no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ — and billions who have never responded to Him in faith — we still have much work to do. It's clear that to finish the mission Jesus gave us, we can't settle for business as usual in North America.

With Southern Baptists in a period of declining baptisms and church membership, we must take a long, hard look at how those realities have shaped our missional potential in the 21st century.

The task before us now is too big and far too important for us not to go all in to complete it. The reality of billions around the world headed for a Christ-less eternity requires that we do whatever it takes to reach the nations.

We're preparing church planters to become more globally minded SBC partners. Each church planter the North American Mission Board (NAMB) partners with commits to give to the Cooperative Program and other Great Commission causes — like the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (which is still ongoing even though Christmas has passed).

We're also providing funds for church planters to take vision trips with the



Guest opinion
with Kevin Ezell

The reality of billions around the world headed for a Christ-less eternity requires that we do whatever it takes to reach the nations.

International Mission Board to see for themselves the needs among unreached people groups (UPGs) throughout the world.

This partnership is already impacting Southern Baptist church planting efforts in North America and throughout the world. One Toronto church planter recently returned from a trip among a UPG in Africa. No city outside of Africa has more people from that UPG than Toronto. NAMB and International Mission Board (IMB) church planters are working together to see how they can help one another in their ministries through this partnership.

When it comes to reaching the nations, we're all in at NAMB. I appreciate IMB's Lottie Moon theme, Totally His. It's consistent with one of our core values at NAMB: Whatever It Takes.

Anyone who walks into our building in Alpharetta, Ga., sees that phrase on a huge sign over our door. We're committed to doing whatever it takes to reach North America because we're committed to doing whatever it takes to reach the world.

Ezell serves as president of NAMB.

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Muslim convert's life, marriage upended by decision

CENTRAL ASIA (BP) — John Harper (not his real name) had just blown it. The Missouri-born Southern Baptist missionary watched as a wave of anger washed over the face of his new friend Rasheed (not his real name), whom Harper just told that Jesus wasn't a prophet as the Quran describes, but God's Son — a very offensive idea to most Muslims.

"He immediately changed the subject," John says, worried that his directness had cost him the chance to forge a long-term relationship for the sake of the Gospel. "I thought he'd never call me again."

That's exactly what Rasheed was planning to do. Put off by the blasphemous (to Muslims) idea that God could have a son, which many Muslims mistakenly believe implies that God physically had sex with Mary, Rasheed resolved to wash his hands of his new American friend.

However, there was a voice inside him that told Rasheed otherwise. "I am 100 percent certain this was not from me," Rasheed explains. The voice said, "Bring yourself closer to that man, develop a relationship with him, listen to him, and he will tell you the way of truth and light."

John was surprised to get a call from Rasheed a few days later, asking if they could meet. Over the next few weeks, the men began to slowly connect. Each time they visited, John looked for opportunities to share bits and pieces of truth.

Rasheed remembers one summer evening in particular. It was late, almost dark, and the two were chatting quietly in Rasheed's garden. "He told me everything. When John was talking to me was almost like there was light coming off his face... He spoke without any fear."

Rasheed wasn't the only one listening. "My wife Helis (not her real name) was there that evening," he says. She heard what John had to say and was very angry.

Helis banned John from the couple's home and told Rasheed he was forbidden to speak to him. That was the night, Rasheed says, when he and John became brothers instead of friends.

Burn it

Barred from the house by Helis, John began meeting Rasheed at his shop in the market. They continued to discuss the Gospel, and Rasheed asked for a Bible under the guise of wanting to learn English. John gave him an Arabic-English version, which Helis quickly banished from their house, too.

He would sometimes sneak and read late at night, but eventually Rasheed realized it was far easier to escape Helis' wrath if he read at his shop while waiting for customers.

The more Rasheed read, the more he wanted to know. "It's like when someone is really hungry and they really want to eat food, in the same way I wanted to go read that Book. It was a hunger for the Word."

As John continued to share the Gospel with Rasheed, he knew it was important for his friend to meet another local from their city who also believed in Jesus. John introduced Rasheed to Ahsan (not his real name), John's close friend and church-planting partner.

Ahsan was quick to explain the severity of the path Rasheed was courting. "He said belief is hard. Following Jesus is not an easy way, especially here, everything terrible comes into the path of believers. You might be killed," Rasheed recalls.

Ahsan's warnings didn't deter Rasheed. He continued to meet with Ahsan and

John, who also connected Rasheed with several other Christians in town. Rasheed's faith was reaching critical mass. He knew the time was coming when he would have to make a decision.

The vision

Asleep at home in February 2011, Rasheed had a dream that would change his life — except it wasn't a dream, he says. It was a vision from God.

"I was in a scary, cold, and dark place. There was a rock wall surrounding me and I knew something terrible would happen, like people were coming to kill me. Then I saw a light come down on me, in the shape of a person, wearing white clothes with a brown sash. Until the day I die I will never forget this."

The man, bathed in light, reached out his hand to Rasheed. "He told me, in my language, 'Don't be afraid, give Me your hand, come with Me and you will be safe.'"

Rasheed woke up. "That wasn't a dream. In my entire life I've never seen a dream like that," he says. It was very early in the morning, around 3:30, but Rasheed says he was so excited he couldn't go back to sleep. He also couldn't wait to tell John.

"Everything I had read, everything I had pursued, everything I had been learning up to that point was true. In my heart there became this joy and I saw the world through eyes of mercy, and I said no matter what happens, whatever comes into my life, this will be the path that I take."

The backlash

The persecution began. Helis knew Rasheed had given his heart to Jesus, and ramped up her vitriolic attacks accordingly. Though her husband was keeping his new faith a secret for now, Helis realized she would be an outcast by association if it were revealed that Rasheed had become an infidel.

Late one night Helis called Jill Foster (not her real name) a short-term Christian worker from Oklahoma, and asked her to come over right away. Foster was a member of John's team and had been trying to befriend Helis while John disciplined Rasheed.

Foster could tell something was wrong from the tone in Helis' voice, but she wasn't prepared for what she saw when Helis answered the door. Splintered wood from smashed furniture was strewn across the living room.

Helis was in tears, her makeup smeared, her dress ripped. The couple's young daughter was curled up in a ball in a corner, crying.

Rasheed sat dazed, chain smoking cigarettes even though he does not smoke to try to calm down. It was obvious the couple had just had a massive fight.

Ushering Foster inside, Helis launched into a tirade against Rasheed, accusing him of everything from adultery to physical abuse. Foster knew Rasheed had been guilty of beating Helis before his conversion, but his behavior had changed radically since accepting Jesus.

Foster suspected she was being manipulated. "There were a couple of times Helis looked at me, and I could be imagining it, but her pupils literally almost looked like slits. I really felt the presence of the enemy," Foster says, wondering whether Helis might be demon-possessed.

She proceeded to talk about how he'd become an infidel and sold his belief and



PAYING THE PRICE — Rasheed (not his real name) shares the story of how God used Southern Baptist missionaries John and Mary Harper (not their real names) and a vision of Jesus in a dream to lead him to faith in Christ. (IMB photo)

how that made her dirty, trying to get me to take her side."

Even though Foster wasn't falling for her ploy, Helis had another trick up her sleeve. She'd hidden a small tape recorder. "Helis used our presence there to manipulate her husband into confessing his faith in Jesus out loud," Foster says.

Helis got the whole incident on tape and told Rasheed she would share the tape with his family if he didn't return to Islam. Rasheed refused and didn't try to stop her.

The confrontation

Helis made good on her promise, revealing Rasheed's dirty little secret to his parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and others. She also recruited her brother-in-law, Saif (not his real name), a local religious leader, to help set her wayward husband straight.

It was the first time Rasheed was truly frightened because of his decision to follow Christ. "I'm probably going to lose my wife and my kids and I might get killed," he says he thought. Not knowing what else to do, he called John for help.

When Saif arrived, Helis told him everything and played the recording of Rasheed's confession.

"Have you forgotten your tribe? Forgotten your mom and dad? Where is your religion? Why have you done this?" Saif asked. "What did they do to benefit you? Did they give you money, cars, houses, land?"

Rasheed told Saif he'd received nothing but didn't deny that he had become a Christian. "I believe in this, and whatever happens, happens," he told his brother-in-law.

Saif was threatening to take Rasheed to court to divorce Helis, when John arrived. "It was like 10 lions came into the room with him," Rasheed says. Without hesitation, John boldly defended Rasheed's decision, but as he and Saif argued back and forth the Islamic leader quickly ran out of things to say.

Rasheed felt an incredible sense of relief. "I looked at John. He was laughing. My wife, she was crazy with anger. It was like fire shooting out from her."

Despite the turmoil, Rasheed says he is grateful to God for his relationship with John and his wife Mary (not her real name), and for using the Harper family to lead him to Jesus.

Headed home

The family's departure from Central Asia in 2012 due to Mary's ALS diagnosis

(Lou Gehrig's disease) came as a hard blow. "When I knew John was going to leave it was like someone takes a bone out of your back and you're paralyzed," Rasheed says. "God brought us together... They helped me walk in the faith. Lots of things happened, but John always had my back."

Rasheed knows John didn't do it alone. "John's strength was Mary. There aren't many women like Mary — strong, long-suffering, patient, beautiful. It was the Spirit of God inside her body. Until like the day I die, I will never forget Mary and I pray that God will be with her in her suffering."

Spousal support is something Rasheed will probably never know. Saif didn't follow through on the divorce threats and so far Rasheed's family hasn't lashed out against his faith, but he's paying the price for his faith at home.

His marriage with Helis remains on the rocks, and his son and daughter are caught in the middle. He struggles to know what to tell them. Despite Helis' hostility, Rasheed still looks for opportunities to share Christ with her, though his actions speak the loudest.

"I was terrible to her," Rasheed admits. "We didn't have any love in our relationship but then I became a believer and changed 100%. I became a better husband. I didn't lie. I didn't mistreat her. I loved her."

Now is the time

Even if things between the couple never improve, Rasheed says it's a sacrifice he's willing to make in exchange for the joy he has in Jesus. "When someone believes in Jesus, especially among my people and Muslims, you can be 100% sure that you're not going to see anything good for the rest of your life."

He often looks back to that night when Jesus visited him in his dreams and reassured him not to be afraid. "Anyone who knows the Word of God will not be without hope. That's God's promise. Life in this world is short. True life is in heaven. I'm waiting on that day."

In the meantime, Rasheed says there is a need for many more workers like the Harpers to share the Gospel with his people. "People here have eyes of darkness. Their eyes are open, but they can't see. Their hearts are closed, but they want to know the Truth. They want to read the Word of God, to know why Christians say Jesus is the Son of God."

"Right now is the time to spread the Good News in my land. Right now is the time to lift up the banner of God."

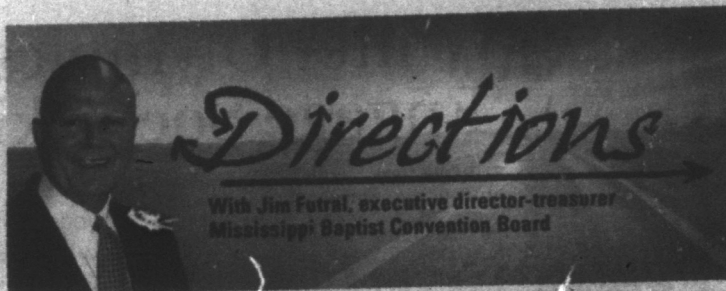
At the stroke of midnight December 31, theoretically we all cross the border into the year 2014. I know that it is an imaginary line, but it is an entryway into what is often a bizarre land. The year 2014 is just another part of the land of time. It is a state we will visit that we have never been in before.

Time is an unusual thing. You cannot see it or touch it, and yet it surrounds all of us. It dictates so many things in our lives. This State of Time is divided into 365 days, 8,760 hours, 525,600 minutes and 31,536,000 seconds. By the way, as you have read this far you have already used up about 30 seconds of your yearly allotment. But since you have over a half million minutes, spend a few of them thinking about what life will be like in this amazing land, this State of Time.

Actually, this state has three counties. The counties are named **Was**, **Will Be**, and **Is**. Most of our days will be spent visiting these three counties in the State of Time. Since you and I will spend so much time here, let me just briefly describe what the landscape is like in each of these counties.

First, look at the county of Was. It is a place dominated by memory. It is kind of a surreal place where nothing actually exists in the present. But it sure seems like everything is real as we visit it. Everyone will drift in and out of this county for there is a lot there. Many people will spend more time in Was than they will spend anywhere else. Was is filled with good and bad. Sometimes the good things that you see in Was can be bad things. The reason being you see them and you think that all of the rest of the State of Time should look like Was. It does not and it will not. That in itself can be discouraging, depressing and destructive.

You see some people visit Was and they cannot leave or they choose not to leave. Now I would be wrong if I did not tell you that there were some good things in that County of Was. There are great moments that can prove to be



The State of Time

inspirational, encouraging and even instructive for your life. There are people that were there, achievements that you remember, victories that were celebrated and they remain in Was.

But there are also hurtful things in Was that need to be dropped, left and forgotten. No doubt some of those things are what Paul was pointing to in his own life when he said, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13). Here is a man who had been abused, misused, beaten, jailed, ignored and isolated. But he refused to let those things, one or all of them, shape his life away from Was.

For just a few moments let's leave Was and go to the county of **Will Be**. This county is a land that is filled with high mountains and grand structures. Well, actually it is the land of plans, hopes and marvelous possibilities. This county is just brimming with the anticipation of joy, new achievements and exciting new relationships. There are people who spend most of life in the county of Will Be. For some it becomes a fantasy world where nothing is actually accomplished and few good

things are happening though they never lose heart and they never lose hope. They just keep on dwelling over in the land of a magical new day.

Surely, God does want us to dream and He wants us to plan, project and strategize to do His will. If someone just stays in the county of Will Be, nothing ever really happens. They are like the folks that plan meetings in order to plan other meetings. They are like the fellow whose philosophy was ready aim, ready aim, ready aim and he never pulled the trigger.

But in this State of 2014, let's visit one other county. It is the county of **Is**. It is the only place that we can actually change anything. Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." For it is in this county, that we can actually engage life and needs and the possibilities become realities. It is here that we actually live. We may go back to Was occasionally and enjoy visiting Will Be, but it is in Is that we function. It is in Is that lives are changed, souls are saved, growth takes place and achievements are celebrated. So what must we do? So that you can be your best, let me suggest three things that can happen in Is.

You can grow. You can follow

the guidelines and the dictates of our Lord and watch for possibilities of spiritual, physical, intellectual and emotional growth. You can grow in the county of Is.

In Is, you can observe. By that I do not mean you are to just sit and watch the world go by, but you can observe others and the needs that may be there and the possibilities that exist. Listen to Jesus as He says, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). There are opportunities around us all of the time to make a difference in someone's life, to share the Good News of Jesus with someone, and to share the redemptive and restorative power of Jesus with the people that we meet. But you will have to live in Is and keep your eyes open and observe.

Finally, you can do. For virtually every one of us, there will be opportunities that will come every day to do something that will be a blessing to others and that will honor our Lord. You do not need to spend 365 days procrastinating. Do what needs to be done! Let God use you!

Over these hills and valleys in the State of 2014, there will be mission opportunities, moments of encouragement, times of reconciliation and joys of achievement. But from one to the next to the next, let God lead you to do what He wants you to do. And when you and I grow, observe and do, we will see the first letters of each word spell **God**. It may well be that if you follow that, you will find God at work in and through your life regardless of whether you are at the workplace, at home, at church, on a ball field, in a store or in a Sunday School Class, and He is busy blessing you.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

College and Seminary News



(At left) Five students from Mississippi received doctorates from **NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY** Dec. 14. Joseph Hardin Cole from Skene, who serves as senior pastor at First Church of Flora, received the doctor of ministry degree; Jeffrey L. Ingram from Mobile, Ala., who serves as adult ministry strategist at the Louisiana Baptist Convention in Alexandria, La., received the doctor of ministry degree; Derek S. Lambert from Mississippi, who serves as senior pastor at First Church High Springs in High Springs, Fla., received the doctor of ministry degree; John Elliot Reid from Hattiesburg, who serves as senior pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Slidell, La., received the doctor of ministry degree; and Jason Roger Wade from Laurel, who serves as family pastor at Petal-Harvey Baptist Church in Petal, received the doctor of ministry degree. Pictured from left to right: Cole; Ingram; Lambert; NOBTS President Chuck Kelley; Reid; and Wade. (At right) Lee Faler, Pastor of **WANILLA CHURCH, MONTICELLO**, received his Master of Divinity degree from the **NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY** during December's commencement exercises. On behalf of the church, deacons (l-r) Marcus Killingsworth, Alvy Dawsey, Rick Davis, and Robert Lea present Faler (center) with a baptismal robe as a graduation present.

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Winter Olympics-themed 'Engage Sochi' kits available

EUROPE (BP) — Athletes from around the world will soon converge in Sochi, Russia, for the 22nd Olympic Winter Games in February 2014. Millions across the globe will gather around their television sets to watch this event.

For Christians, this creates a unique opportunity to share the Gospel, not only at the games but within their own communities.

While it is important to use the Olympics as an opportunity to share the Gospel in the host city, it is important for Christians to use the event to spread the Gospel around their own communities, said Marc Ira Hooks, an International Mission Board (IMB) correspondent based in Europe and co-director of the Engage Sochi project.

IMB launched Engage Sochi earlier this year as an evangelism and church planting project for the 2014 Winter Olympics. The Engage So-

"The message we have to share is so much more precious than winning a gold medal, something only a few ever get the chance to do. We are talking about something that every person can have — a personal relationship with God, and the Olympic colors help tell that story."

Ira Hooks

International Mission Board (IMB) correspondent

chi team prepared a resource kit called, Engage Your Community. The kit helps Christians use the Olympic Games as a way to share the Gospel regardless of their location.

"The message we have to share is so much more precious than winning a gold medal, something only a few ever get the chance to do," Hooks said. "We are talking about something that every person can have — a personal relationship with God, and

the Olympic colors help tell that story."

Hooks noted that the colors used in the Olympic rings are the same colors that Southern Baptists have used for years to share the Gospel.

The kit contains Olympic outreach ideas, sermon outlines, and small-group lessons for every age group. The kit also includes sheet music for the Engage Sochi theme song, Where the Sea Meets the Snow, written specifically for the project by Nashville worship leader and songwriter Jeff Bourque.

"We are very excited about this project," Hooks said. "The second the torch is lit in Sochi, people from around the world will be tuned in to what is happening in Sochi. What better way to start a conversation?"

"This is not just a thing for churches in the States. Churches from around the world will be using these materials to help reach the people in their communities share the message of Jesus with their friends and neighbors."

The packet is also available in Russian and will be used by Russian-language churches across Russia and Europe. In addition, churches in other countries will host special Olympic-themed services and events using these materials.

To download the Engage Your Community packet, visit engagesochi.org/resources. An online version of the color-based evangelism presentation is currently available in English and in Russian. Other language translations and a downloadable mobile app will be added in early 2014. The online presentation can be found at engagesochi.org.

For more information, contact Hooks at marc@engagesochi.org.

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Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

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OBITUARIES

Tommy Whaley, 67, died December 11 at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. Born on March 14, 1946 in Columbus, he was son of the late Lem and Delia Mae Hanson Whaley. He attended New Hope High School and received his Bible degree from Liberty University. Whaley was the pastor of Bigbee Church, Monroe Association, for over 20 years. He pastored other churches in Alabama and Mississippi. Survivors include his wife, Gloria E. Harris, of Fayette, AL; daughters Kim Norris (Mitch) and Becky Gregory (Paul) of Amory; eight grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

Horace Clay Thomas, 84, of New Albany, died Oct. 26 at Baptist Memorial Hospital in New Albany. A pastor for 61 years, Thomas was born on July 3, 1929, in Baldwin to Virgil and Myrtle Saylor Thomas. He was a 1947 graduate of Center High School in Union County, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biblical Studies from Blue Mountain College in 1959. His pastorates included New Harmony, Oak Hill, Glenfield and Wallerville Churches in Union County; Shiloh and Wheeler Grove Churches in Alcorn County; Fellowship and Springdale Churches in Tippah County; First Church of Hickory Flat; Beldon Church in Tupelo; Immanuel Church in Greenwood; and Trinity Church in Fulton. He was a member of Wallerville Church in New Albany. Thomas is survived by his wife of 65 years, Delynnne Murrah Thomas of New Albany; one sister, Dayle Thomas, of Los Angeles, Ca.; one son,

Gregg Thomas (Karen) of New Albany; one granddaughter; one grandson; one step-granddaughter; and one step-great-grandson. He was preceded in death by his parents, two brothers, and four sisters. Services were held at the United Funeral Services Chapel in New Albany with his son, Gregg Thomas, and Charles Rodgers officiating. Interment was at Vista Memorial Park in New Albany.

Donna Rose Duck Wheeler, 71, of Hattiesburg, longtime administrator at William Carey University in Hattiesburg and namesake of the university's alumni house, died November 13 after a long battle with brain cancer. Wheeler was born to Fred and Myrtle Duck of Bay Minette, AL, on January 16, 1942. She was graduated from Baldwin County High School and received a degree in Secretarial Science from William Carey University in 1965. Wheeler served the university for 42 years until retirement as alumni director in 2007. The same year, the university awarded her the Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Wheeler authored the pictorial history of the university, and was recognized with the university's Outstanding Service Award in 2006. She was an active member of First Church, Hattiesburg, since her college days. She is survived by her husband, E. Milton Wheeler, of Hattiesburg; two sisters, Judy (Mike) Wade of Bay Minette, AL, and Darlene (David) Cook of Thomasville, Ga. A celebration memorial service was held December 7 at the university, with Tommy King, university president, officiating.



THOMAS



WHEELER

CONFERENCE

cont. from p. 1

in Memphis and current dean of the Adrian Rogers Center for Biblical Preaching at Mid-America Seminary in Memphis.

■ Don Wilton, senior pastor of First Church, Spartanburg, N.C.

"As you look at the list of speakers, you will see men who have a heart for God and a desire to lead fellow Christians to the front lines. I believe that God has a word for you that He will make clear through the preaching of these men that will impact your life for eternity," Lum said.

Praise and worship will be provided by the music ministry of Northcrest Church under the direction of the church's worship pastor, Paul Davis.

Dinner will be provided for conference attendees between the close (4:30 p.m.) of the Jan. 27 afternoon session and the beginning (6:15 p.m.) of the evening session. There is no cost and no reservations are required.

For more information, contact the MBCB Evangelism Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: jellis@mbcb.org. Web site: mbcb.org.

The annual Mississippi Baptist State Evangelism is supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program. For more information on the Cooperative Program, visit <http://mbcb.org/cp>.

MS POSITIONS

GUNTER ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH IN FLORENCE, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Please send resumes to rdjukes@bellsouth.net or via mail to Personnel Committee c/o Craig Dukes, 2209 Woodland Place, Florence, MS 39073.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN TUPELO, MS, HAS AN OPENING FOR DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY. We are seeking a candidate with experience in Children's Ministry and with a passion for leading children grades 1-6 into a relationship with Jesus Christ. If interested, please send your resume to charnell@tcbtupeelo.org.

TILLATOBA BAPTIST CHURCH, TILLATOBA MS, YALOBUSHA ASSOCIATION, IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR. Please send resume to Tillatoba Baptist Church: Attn: Music Search Committee, P.O. Box 101, Tillatoba, MS 38961.

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SPJS VPEA JSAA CSNHA; DN BQ FAPZA.

HTRA ABDSJ: GNUJM-ABDSJ

Clue: V = M

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error.

By Charles Marx, 1937-2004. © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Depend on the Spirit • John 15:26-16:15

What did Jesus teach about the Trinity and the person of the Holy Spirit? These two questions are closely related. Jesus said He was going to send the Holy Spirit from the Father. "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify to Me," John 15:26 (NKJV).

All three persons of the God Head (the Trinity) are in this verse acting together in concert. The three persons are God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The term Trinity does not appear in the Bible but we can look at Jesus' teachings. When the Spirit of Truth comes from the Father He testifies about and explains the Son. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you," John 16:13-14 (NKJV).

John records much more about the Holy Spirit than about the doctrine of the Trinity, not that they are separate teachings. Jesus was trying to explain to the eleven that His going away would be to their advantage. "Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your

benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send Him to you," John 16:7 (HCSB).

John 15:27 tells us when the Holy Spirit comes witnessing to Jesus, He will also help us testify about Jesus with power directly from God the Father. "I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling," John 16:1 (HCSB). One of

the major teachings about God the Spirit is He enables and helps us when we have things too big to do alone. Jesus gave the disciples a very specific example of what they would face in the near future. Jesus told them they would be banned from the synagogues. The synagogue rulers were going to participate in the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus and they certainly did not want his followers embarrassing them in the synagogues where they were in charge.

Jesus told them they were not only

going to be banned from the synagogues but "In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God," John 16:2 (HCSB). Jesus told the disciples about the problems that were going to beset them quickly, so they wouldn't stumble or be surprised. "But I have told you these things so that when their time comes you may remember I told them to you. I didn't tell you these

things from the beginning, because I was with you," John 16:4 (HCSB).

As Jesus explains the role the Holy Spirit we

discover that He has an essential role in salvation. God has to enable the lost to understand their need to be saved and give them the ability to believe and He does this through the Holy Spirit. God gives us total freedom to choose whether or not to accept Jesus as our Lord and savior. But we would not be able to accept Christ as Savior and Lord without the Holy Spirit enabling us. Jesus said it

this way, "When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment," John 16:8 (HCSB).

He defines sin as not believing in Jesus Christ. "About sin, because they do not believe in Me," John 16:9 (HCSB). This is the same definition of sin given us in John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God," (ASV). The ruler of this world, Satan, has already been judged; "about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged," John 16:11 (HCSB).

The Holy Spirit will lead us to truth, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth," John 16:13 (HCSB). A major part of this truth is that God sent His Son that He might save the world.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved," John 3:16-17 (NKJV).

Hicks is a member of Brandon Church, Brandon.



Explore the Bible
with Don Hicks

A Fight You Can't Win By Yourself • Romans 7:14-8:2

Paul wasn't afraid to be transparent with the Romans about his struggles as a Christian. He wanted them to understand that although they had a new life in Christ and were dead to sin and alive to righteousness, that they would still struggle with their flesh and its unholy desires. He wrote, "For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns]. (Romans 7:15, Amplified Bible)

"This is more than the cry of one desperate man—it describes the experience of any Christian struggling against sin or trying to please God by keeping rules and laws without the Spirit's help. We must never underestimate the power of sin. We must never attempt to fight it in our own strength." (Life Application Bible Commentary)

Paul wrote that when he did that which he hated, it was not the work of the new man in him that was created in righteousness, but rather it was the work of the old sin nature that dwelt in his flesh. Paul realized that there was no good thing in his flesh, just as there is no good thing in ours. Inside he willed to do good, but the

doing of the good was not present within him. Paul learned that there are two natures in the man born of God. In John 3:6, Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The struggle between these two natures can become so intense one may sometimes wonder whether he is indeed in right standing with God.

Dr. Charles Stanley says that we are not to despair when this occurs and that he believes "everyone born of God passes more or less through this; and often those who pass through the deepest are those chosen to glorify God the most."

If a believer, however, does not recognize these two natures and seeks to keep the law and live under it, he is most miserable. In his inner man he longs for holiness, but when he attempts under the law to bring about that holiness, he

discovers a deeper rut for himself in his frustration. Paul declared the wretchedness of this situation in verse 24: "O, unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death?" (Amplified Bible) Then Paul comes to the realization that he has been delivered from this body of death. In verse 25 he joyfully

thanks God through Christ Jesus our Lord. He concludes the verse by acknowledging that with his mind (the

new man) he serves the law of God, but with the flesh (the old nature), the law of sin. Paul declares in Romans 8:1-2 that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. We are dead to sin and the law, but alive to God through Christ Jesus. We are members of His body and since there is no condemnation in Him, neither is there in us in the new

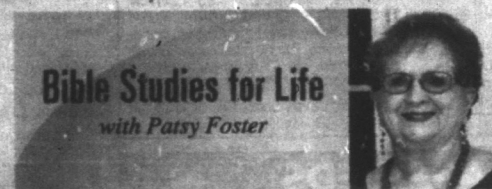
man created in righteousness and true holiness. In Christ Jesus is the place of perfect peace and contentment. How can this be—because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death.

Charles Spurgeon made this profound statement, "Evil enters us now as an interloper and a stranger, and works sad havoc, but it does not abide in us upon the throne; it is an alien, and despised, and no more honored and delighted in. We are dead to the reigning power of sin."

"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me." (Galatians 2:19-20)

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, KJV)

Foster is a member of Murphy Creek Church, Louisville.



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Just for the Record



The youth of **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, enjoyed a progressive supper Dec. 15. Youth attending, front row, left to right, Georganna Allen, Carrie Pyeatt, Kinley Douglas, Karly Leake; back row, Charis Wilson, Kacy Leggett, Kara Beth Crosby, and Emily Crosby.



The children of **EASTSIDE CHURCH, PEARL**, presented their Christmas program, Candle Light and Carols, Dec. 15.



The children of **SIMMONS MEMORIAL CHURCH, FLORA**, presented The Birth of Jesus Dec. 15.



The children of **SHILOH CHURCH, SONTAG**, presented their Christmas musical Out of the Box.



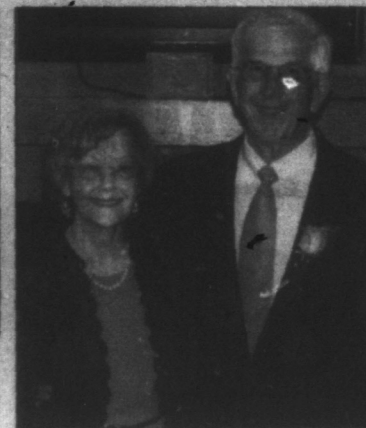
BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR, recognizes its perfect attenders in Sunday School for the 2012 - 13 church year: tsham Snowden & Alan Kelly - one year; Mary Ann Kelly, Nathan Kelly, Hailey Snowden & Gary Pinson - two year; BeBe Williams, Billy E. Williams - three years; Elton Bryan - 20 years; Barbara J. Harrison - 31 years; Laverne Chaney & Will Motley - 36 years; Neal Motley - 44 years. Pastor is Gary Rivers.



The children from **GRACE UNITED CHURCH, DECATUR**, presented their Christmas program, The Story, Dec. 15, under the direction of Michelle Addy.



DOCKERY CHURCH, DOCKERY, ordained Blake McCollough to the gospel ministry Nov. 1. Shown are Mid-Delta Association AMD Tommy Williamson (Blake's grandfather); McCollough; and Nathan Pellegra.



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- DR. JIM FUTRAL

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